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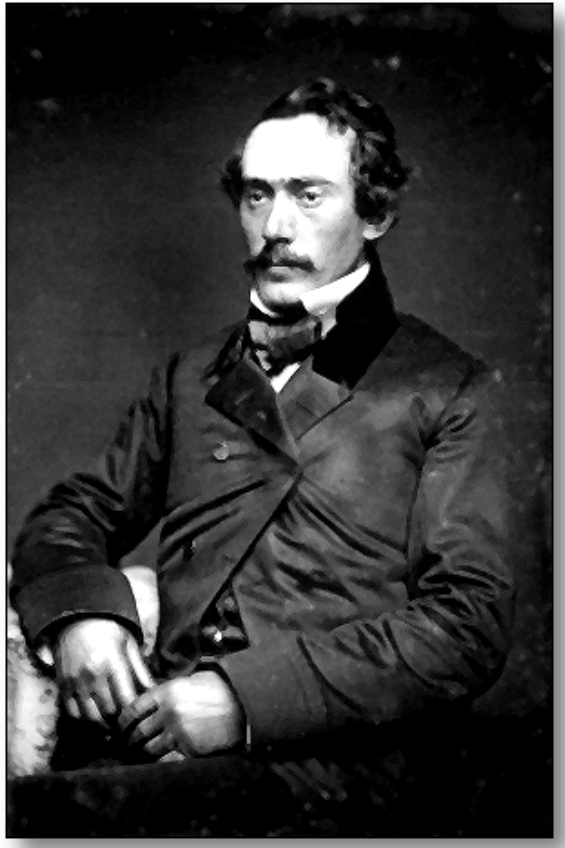
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"DEFEATED IN WAR AND PEACE": THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY CAREER OF MAJOR EDMUND C. WEEKS

By R. Thomas Dye



Edmund C. Weeks, 1854
— Courtesy Florida State Archives

The 1994 issue of the *Sunland Tribune* included a fascinating primary source document on the Civil War in Florida entitled "My National Troubles: The Civil War Papers of William McCullough." McCullough served as 1st Lieutenant, Company A, 2nd Florida Cavalry, stationed in the Cedar Keys and Fort Myers. In his diary, McCullough makes a number of disparaging references towards his commanding officer, referring to him as "my

deadly enemy." It soon becomes evident that a major source of McCullough's "National Troubles" was Major Edmund C. Weeks.¹ Indeed, Edmund C. Weeks was a controversial figure in Florida history. He admittedly shot a sentry under his command, and the incident would forever mar his military and subsequent political career. However, Major Weeks was fully exonerated in a general court martial, and credible evidence existed that "refugee" troops, consisting of southern Unionists as well as deserters from the Confederate army, had conspired against him.

Rowland H. Rerick's *Memoirs of Florida* contains the only published biography of Edmund C. Weeks. Rerick poetically concludes a brief, one-page essay stating, "the life of Major Weeks reads like a romance and his exploits and daring acts would fill a volume."² Those exploits included surviving the Battle of New Orleans; narrowly avoiding capture by Confederate forces; and being tried for murder under a penalty of death. After the war, Weeks traded a colorful, though checkered military career for a similar record in state politics. During Florida's long and difficult reconstruction period Weeks held a string of Republican patronage positions, including a brief and factious stint as Lieutenant Governor.

Edmund Cottle Weeks was born in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on March 10, 1829. His family was an old and prominent one in New England. Edmund's father,

Captain Hiram Weeks, was a sea captain and his mother, Margaret Cottle, was related to New York Senator Thomas Platt. As a boy Weeks received the best education available by attending private schools in Colchester, Connecticut. On occasion, the young man had opportunities to sail with his father on cross-Atlantic voyages. By the time young Weeks packed his bags for college, he had sailed to South America, the Coast of Africa, and visited London.³

Weeks spent three years as a medical student at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. The decision to withdraw from medical school, for reasons unknown, created a rift between young Weeks and his family. Unsure of his ambition, restless, and running short of finances, Weeks signed on with the clipper ship *Nestorian* as a common seaman. The life of a sailor suited young Weeks, and while in England he met Miss Mary Jones of London, whom he later wed. After three years at sea sailing clipper ships out of Boston and Savannah, Weeks' education, sailing experience, and ability to navigate advanced him to the rank of master working for the shipping firm of Wallace Sherwood and Co. By 1860, he was no longer at sea and worked at company office headquarters in Boston as an accountant.

Like many young men, Weeks saw the coming of Civil War as an escape from otherwise dull employment and as an opportunity to advance his career. Soon after hostilities commenced at Fort Sumter, he resigned from Wallace Sherwood and Co. and applied for a commission in the United States Navy. Weeks was given the rank of Acting Master on the USS *Pensacola*, serving in Admiral David A. Farragut's fleet.

Weeks' Civil War career proved anything but dull. Within months of enlisting, he

participated in the Union naval attack on New Orleans. On April 24, 1862, the *Pensacola* was struck nine times by shell fire from Confederate batteries guarding the mouth of the Mississippi.⁴ The ship sustained heavy damage and there were numerous casualties. Fortunately, the ship was not struck below the waterline. Acting Master Weeks commanded two large guns in the ship's bow during the attack. While shelling Confederate positions, a nearby exploding shell blew the hammer of Weeks' 80-pound cannon overboard. Weeks ordered a sailor aft to retrieve a replacement, and watched as a shell struck the man, "cut from the waist in three places."⁵ As action on the deck of the *Pensacola* intensified, Weeks remained at his post calmly reloading his guns and accurately sighting Confederate shore batteries. The Union fleet succeeded in reducing Confederate forts at the mouth of the river to rubble and Farragut's fleet sailed victoriously up the Mississippi River capturing New Orleans. Executive Officer E. A. Row wrote, "the forward division consisting of the 11-inch pivot and the 80-pound rifle gun was admirable served under the orders of acting Master E. C. Weeks."⁶ Weeks' combat performance was exemplary considering the heavy gunfire absorbed by the *Pensacola*. The same could not be said for all of the crew. Row added to his report, "with pain," that the captain of the number-six gun gave up his position. In another "still humiliating instance," William Copper, shellman of the number-two gun, "deserted his station and was twice hauled from behind the forward bitts by the men of our ship."⁷

After the mayor of New Orleans surrendered the city to Union forces many of the *Pensacola's* officers were parceled out to command captured vessels. Weeks served briefly on board a former Confederate steamboat and was assigned duty with



Edmund C. Weeks, Acting Master, U.S. Navy

--Courtesy Florida State Archives

Union occupation forces in New Orleans. Damage to the *Pensacola* prevented Weeks from taking part in Farragut's continued operations on the Mississippi River. He did take part in an attack on Fort Hudson, Louisiana and commanded troops on land in another amphibious operation at the Battle of Franklin, Louisiana.

In the fall of 1863, Weeks became ill with fever and received sick leave to New York. After recuperating, he returned to service and was reassigned to the East Coast Blockading Squadron as the Executive Officer on the *USS Tahoma* under Captain Semmes. Weeks reported to his new ship

with some previous experience at leading coastal raiding parties and serving aboard the *Tahoma*. Weeks gained a reputation as an aggressive and competent officer at commanding ground operations.

On February 16, 1864, Weeks led a small assault team in an attack on a large Confederate salt works near Saint Marks, Florida. The works were defended by a small contingent of Confederate shore militia augmented by a company of Confederate cavalry. Weeks took the post by surprise, scattering the enemy forces. His surprise attack was assisted by a paramilitary group of 96 escaped slaves that he had formed a partnership with in his coastal operations. The facility was destroyed and twelve prisoners were taken, including a Confederate infantry captain. Weeks' commanding officer reported:

I can not speak in too high terms of Master E. C. Weeks, who commanded the operation. This officer performed the duty assigned with alacrity and cheerfulness. I take great pleasure in bringing him to your notice as an officer of courage and skill, and most heartily recommend for promotion.⁸

Ten days later Weeks led another raid. Under the cover of darkness, he slipped three small boats past the shore pickets on Shell Point, Florida, and rowed silently up Goose Creek. His assault team succeeded in surrounding the small village of Shell Point, "capturing everyone therein." Once again, Weeks' raid was assisted by escaped slaves who gave him the location and whereabouts of enemy troops. Weeks destroyed another salt works and made off with several prisoners just moments before a Confederate relief force arrived. Weeks' prisoners included a Confederate Lieutenant, J. G. Stephen who had lost a leg, "his wound not

yet healed, and two other men who were over 50 years old and sick."⁹ The prisoners were later paroled and put ashore.

Although Weeks was a seaman at heart, his abilities at commanding ground forces soon came to the attention at Key West District Union Army Headquarters. When General Daniel Woodbury began to organize a new regiment of Florida cavalry, Weeks became the logical choice for command. Woodbury requested of the Secretary of Navy that Weeks be permitted to resign from the U. S. Navy to accept a commission in the U. S. Army. Admiral Theodorus Bailey, Weeks superior, gave him a hearty endorsement for the promotion and transfer. On July 16, 1864, Bailey wrote to Weeks:

I trust that the good opinion of the officers and men which you seem to have won in the service you have already performed in connection with the portion of the army stationed on the Florida coast may be continued in your new appointment."¹⁰

Weeks resigned his commission as a naval officer to accept command of the U. S. Second Regiment Florida Cavalry, stationed at Depot Key, in Cedar Keys, Florida. Although the war was quickly winding down Weeks reasonably expected that with several aggressive raids into the Florida interior he might be promoted to Colonel before hostilities ceased. However, Weeks faced several challenges in organizing his new command. Weeks new regiment consisted of Southern Unionists, Confederate deserters, and a few escaped convicts and criminals.¹¹ There was some discontent over Weeks appointment, and the men of the Second had hoped that one of their own, James D. Green would have been appointed to command their regiment.¹²

When Floridians enlisted in the Union army their families moved onto Depot Key and received provisions and protection from the U. S. government. The post was consistently short of provisions and Weeks was under the impression that many of his troops had enlisted in the Union Army simply to eat and/or steal government supplies. Weeks also viewed discipline in the unit as lax, below standards he had been accustomed to in the navy.

Like many new commanders Weeks wanted to make an impression on his new regiment. Soon after he arrived at Depot Key in the Cedar Keys, he reprimanded one of his company commanders for displaying an unprofessional and casual relationship towards the men in the regiment. The junior officers of the regiment retaliated by reporting Weeks to the War Department when they discovered that he did not yet hold a commission. As a result, Weeks was temporarily suspended from all duties. The delay in receiving a formal commission from Washington forced Weeks to return to Key West where he was temporarily placed in charge of the army commissary on Dry Tortugas until his paperwork was processed. Evidence too, suggests that Weeks may have grown despondent over his limbo status, no longer a naval officer and not officially an officer in the army. In his depressed state of mind, Weeks may have become a heavy drinker. Later, he would be accused of drunkenness and misappropriating military property during this period.¹³ Thus began a familiar pattern in Weeks' military career. In combat he proved to be a brave and competent officer, yet he sometimes failed to exercise good judgment in the more mundane affairs of military command.

On September 1, 1864, Weeks received his long-awaited commission as a major in the U. S. Army. He had no sooner reported back

to the Cedar Keys, to "officially" assume command of his regiment when he was involved in an incident that would forever hinder his military and later, his political career.

Major Weeks returned to the Cedar Keys on the evening of September 9, 1864, celebrating his return to the command with the captain of the schooner *Harriet*. It's likely that the two men partook of the ship's whiskey rations to toast Weeks' return to command. Upon disembarking from the *Harriet* onto the long pier on Depot Key, Weeks was challenged by a sentry. Private James L. White offended his new commanding officer. Private White may have been asleep, failed to use proper military protocol, or have been out of uniform. The exact offense is difficult to determine given the conflicting testimonies. What is known, is that Weeks began to berate the private. An argument escalated and Weeks allegedly struck and kicked Private White. The stunned private reeled backwards from the blows falling off the pier onto the beach. Weeks grabbed his rifle as he fell. White recovered from the fall, leapt to his feet and began running away from his irate commanding officer. Weeks yelled an order to "halt" but the frightened private failed to respond. Taking careful aim with White's Enfield rifle, Weeks shot him through the leg from a distance of 25 feet.¹⁴

The shot alarmed the entire post. Several men and officers arrived on the scene, including two of Weeks' company commanders, William Strickland and William Stebbins. Captain Strickland placed Weeks under arrest. The two officers later testified that when approaching Weeks he aimed a rifle at them before submitting to arrest and that en route to headquarters for questioning, Weeks and Strickland engaged in a physical altercation. Two days later

Private White died, and Weeks was charged with murder.¹⁵

A general court-martial convened in Key West on November 1, 1864. Weeks was accused of "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" and "conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline," in that he called Captain Strickland "a damned rascal and a damned rebel spy or words to that effect." Week's struggle with Strickland and threats made towards his guards prompted a number of additional charges. He was accused of "attempted murder" for pointing a loaded revolver at Second Lieutenant Stebbins and saying, "You had better shut up; you are a goddamn coward arresting your superior officer." The officer preferring charges was Colonel Benjamin R. Townsend, commanding the Second Regiment, United States Colored Infantry.¹⁶

The case against Weeks looked strong, and some of Weeks' fellow officers suggested he should plead guilty so that the court would spare his life in exchange for a long sentence, but Weeks was determined to prove his innocence. The prosecution began its case with the testimony of Private Samuel Green, the only eyewitness to the shooting. Green recalled:

He [Major Weeks] kicked him [Private White] three or four times. I don't know how many. He turned him loose and he fell off the wharf onto the ground. He stumbled a piece, . . . White recovered himself, got up on his hands and feet. Major Weeks says to him "Halt" and about that time he got straight on his feet to run, he told him "Halt" again, and shot him.¹⁷

The trial lasted over three months. The prosecution's case sounded convincing, with

several officers and post doctor testifying that Weeks was drunk that evening.

Weeks hired two private attorneys from Boston to handle his case, and his own medical training helped to build a credible defense. When Weeks' attorneys began their argument, they introduced evidence that the post physician, Doctor Samuel Wilcox, was incompetent, and that his negligent treatment of Private White's wound was the actual cause of his death. Expert medical testimony revealed that White's wound was relatively minor. The bullet had not struck bone or any major arteries, and an autopsy revealed that White had died from infection. In addition, Doctor Wilcox had been severely reprimanded on previous occasions. The Army's Office of Surgeon General had recommended his dismissal finding his post hospital, "filthy and filled with bed tics."¹⁸ Wilcox's own testimony detailing his qualifications as a physician revealed he had received his training at Augusta Medical College in two four-hour courses; (Weeks himself, was more qualified as a surgeon than Wilcox). The prosecution's next witness was Captain William Wilson Strickland. Strickland had served as acting commanding officer of the regiment in Weeks' absence and it was evident in the testimony that Weeks and Strickland had engaged in some earlier disagreements. Strickland's testimony accusing Weeks of resisting arrest was inconsistent with the testimony of other witnesses. Most damaging of all, Captain Strickland admitted that before joining the regiment he had served as an officer in the Confederate Army.¹⁹ The provost guards that placed Weeks under arrest were also deserters from the rebel army, and one man testifying for the prosecution was a convicted cattle rustler.²⁰



This is believed to be a picture of Edmund C. Weeks in his later years.

— Courtesy Florida State Archives

Weeks' defense team constructed a credible case that a conspiracy existed in the camp. Defense witnesses testified that there was a plot among some of the men in the regiment to assassinate Major Weeks. Weeks never took the stand; consequently, his version of the events that occurred that evening were never fully explained. However, by the time the defense rested, Weeks' guilt was in doubt. The jury of officers adjourned to reach a decision, but not before Weeks' defense team succeeded in disqualifying one of the officers for expressing a preconceived opinion as to Weeks' guilt.

When the verdict was rendered, the jury concluded that the prosecution lacked the

necessary evidence to find Weeks guilty, and he was acquitted on all counts, and Captain Strickland's commission was revoked after the trial. Nevertheless, considerable doubt remained regarding Weeks' behavior that evening.

Major Weeks was fully restored to his command and he returned to Depot Key wanting to erase the stain of the court martial from his record. Combat performance was what counted in the military and Weeks initiated numerous raids out of the Cedar Keys into the Confederate-held interior. His Second Regiment of Florida Cavalry raided nearby hamlets and plantations, liberating slaves and capturing cattle, wagons, and property. Among the property seized were many slaves and their disposition soon became a concern. In February 1865, Major Weeks reported, "We have some 30 or 40 able-bodied Negroes here. Shall I enlist them, and for what regiment?"²¹

Eventually, Weeks' forays became enough of a local irritant to be dealt with seriously by Confederate forces in Florida. On February 8, 1865, Weeks' regiment, augmented by elements of the Second U. S. Colored Infantry marched out of the Cedar Keys on yet another raiding expedition. Confederate Captain J. J. Dickison, "the swamp fox," ambushed Weeks five days later. Weeks' forces were returning from a patrol that had gone as far as Levyville, capturing 100 head of cattle, 50 slaves and 13 horses. Captain Dickison's plan was to cut Weeks' troops off from their base in the Cedar Keys, but Dickison arrived too late to properly execute his plan.²² Weeks and most of his cavalry had reached Cedar Key when Dickison attacked his trailing infantry about a mile east of the Cedar Keys at a location known as the Number Four Station. In the opening moments of the skirmish, Union

forces were scattered. Weeks heard the gunfire and dashed back to Number Four Station and found his men "flying in all directions." Weeks rallied his troops and repulsed the attack, at a cost of five killed and 18 wounded. Weeks reported: "I kept my men down, and when they were within short musket range I opened fire. They stood two rounds and then left. They tried us there three times, my men behaved all the time with the utmost coolness . . . I ordered the Negroes to charge, which they did in fine style led by Sergeant William Wilson, who behaved very bravely."²³

Confederate forces also lost five men and suffered an unknown number of wounded. Captain Dickison's official report boasts of having killed or wounded over 70 of the enemy. His report was exaggerated, as was Weeks'. However, the Confederates were successful in recapturing most of the stolen booty as Dickison reported, "recapturing all which they had stolen on their thieving expedition."²⁴ Weeks' forces accomplished their goal as well by returning in good order to Cedar Key.

In early 1865 the scene of Weeks' operations shifted to the Panhandle coast. In mid-February, General John Newton, commanding the District of Key West and Tortugas, and Admiral C. R. Stribling, commanding the East Coast Blockading Squadron, decided to cooperate in a plan to capture Saint Marks, Florida in preparation for a possible assault on the state capital at Tallahassee. The raid would fall short of both goals as Confederate forces were successful in rallying a force strong enough to prevent the crossing of the Saint Marks River at the Battle of Natural Bridge.²⁵

On February 27, 1865, Major Weeks loaded three companies of his Florida Cavalry along with three companies of U. S. Colored

Troops on board the steamer *Magnolia* and sailed North from the Cedar Keys. Before arriving at the designated rendezvous with the fleet, Weeks landed six men, including Private William Strickland, at the mouth of the Aucilla River with orders to burn the railroad trestle over the river. The mission was a dangerous one and it was well known that Confederate militia regularly patrolled the river and the rail line. Weeks may have secretly harbored an ulterior motive in assigning the mission to the former Captain Strickland. Strickland's testimony in Weeks' court martial and their previous disagreements made for an uncomfortable relationship for two men serving in the same unit. Weeks was also fully aware that if Strickland was captured he would most likely be executed as a traitor and deserter from the Confederate Army. After leaving the men at the mouth of the Aucilla, the *Magnolia* continued to steam north but a similar operation at the Little Aucilla River was aborted because Weeks felt the mission was too dangerous due to sightings of Confederate militia.

When the *Magnolia* joined the fleet on March 3, Weeks was given his familiar role of leading a small force ashore to secure a beachhead. With 60 of his own men and another 30 seamen under acting Ensign Whitman of the schooner *O. H. Lee*, Weeks landed at the Saint Marks Lighthouse. Surprising the Confederate guards at the East River Bridge, Weeks captured the bridge, along with a cannon and a horse. The next morning Weeks' small advance team was counter-attacked by Confederate cavalry. Weeks repulsed the attack, but was unsure how long he could hold the captured bridge without support from the main force. Making good use of the captured horse, Weeks dispatched a rider back to the Saint Marks Lighthouse to see if the troops were unloading from the Union ships. Upon being

informed that several vessels had run aground and troop landings were delayed, Weeks withdrew to the lighthouse under attack from skirmishers.²⁶

General Newton and the main force landed later that afternoon and began their advance on the afternoon of March 5. The bridge that Weeks had briefly held had to be recaptured from an enemy cavalry unit. The expedition was further delayed while the 99th Regiment New York Colored Infantry repaired the damaged structure. Feeling frustrated by the numerous delays in the operations, Weeks dashed across the repaired bridge and pushed rapidly up the east bank of the Saint Marks River hoping to reach Newport before Confederate forces could prepare defensive positions. Arriving at Newport, Weeks found the bridge across the Saint Marks on fire and partially destroyed. He ordered an immediate attack in an effort to save the much-needed crossing, but was held in check by heavy fire from the west side of the river. He then ordered concentrated artillery fire on the enemy positions in an effort to drive Confederate forces from their entrenchments on the opposite bank. When General Newton arrived at Newport with the main force it was obvious that a crossing over the damaged bridge would be impossible. Assisted by collaborators, Newton learned of another crossing at Natural Bridge where the Saint Marks River runs underground for several hundred yards. General Newton left Newport with the main force and continued on to Natural Bridge, while Weeks remained behind to prevent the Confederates from crossing into the Union rear across the damaged but still standing bridge. Weeks spent the rest of the day exchanging artillery and small arms fire with the enemy and preventing one attempt by Confederates to throw planks across the damaged Newport Bridge and

cross it. Newton's force was unable to break the hastily assembled Confederate line at Natural Bridge. Numerous delays in the operation had allowed Confederate General Sam Jones enough time to mass a force large enough to defend the crossing, consequently Union forces withdrew. In the Saint Marks operations Weeks was again cited by his commanding officer:

I have the honor to submit the following recommendations for the gallant and distinguished services. . . Major E. C. Weeks, Second Florida Cavalry, for gallant and distinguished conduct on February 9 and March 4, 5 and 6, and for general conduct. Recommended for brevet to Lieutenant Colonel.²⁷

Weeks' court martial made the possibility of promotion impossible. In his last military campaign, he had been forced to retreat, but Weeks had not given up on the idea of capturing Tallahassee. His next assault on the state capital would employ political tactics. As for Private Strickland, he was captured attempting to destroy the Aucilla railroad trestle and executed before a firing squad as a deserter.²⁸ Major Weeks could not have been grieved to hear of Strickland's demise.

In the aftermath of the Civil War accounts of "no-good Yankee carpetbaggers" responsible for heaping even more pain, suffering, and sorrow upon a nearly destitute people of the South became a familiar theme in Southern history. The demise of the carpetbaggers is generally attributed to the rise of the Bourbons and the final re-establishment of the Democratic Party after the presidential election of 1876. Republican carpetbaggers then returned to the lands of snow and ice. In fact though, many re-

mained in the South. Edmund C. Weeks, for one, put down his roots and made Florida his permanent home.

After a few weeks of occupation duty in Tallahassee, Major Weeks was mustered out of the service on September 30, 1865. During his wartime raids into the interior of Florida, he had been impressed by the luxurious plantation homes of Southern planters. Weeks decided to become a Southern plantation baron and emulate the lifestyle of his former foes. Accordingly, Weeks began to buy up property in Tallahassee at depressed post-war prices. His most ambitious acquisition was Tuscawilla, a large and once prosperous cotton plantation east of Tallahassee.²⁹ The former owner, Doctor G. W. Parkhill, had been killed at Gaines Mill in the Seven Days Battle defending Richmond. Weeks leased the property from the surviving family agreeing to pay the taxes owed on the land and allowing the family to maintain ownership. Before the war, the Parkhills employed over 300 slaves at Tuscawilla.³⁰ Weeks, like other planters during Reconstruction, could not afford to pay for agricultural labor and therefore subleased it to sharecroppers.

Weeks was wholly unprepared for a career as a planter. He had no experience in cotton farming and he underestimated the investment needed to operate a 3,000 acre property.³¹ The price of needed equipment, seed, and labor made it necessary for Weeks to take out a number of loans. His timing couldn't have been worse. The agricultural situation in Leon County after the war was disastrous. In 1866 and 1867, the Leon County cotton crop was attacked by caterpillars. To combat the insect, the Tallahassee *Sentinel* advised lighting small fires in the fields to destroy the flies that produced the destructive larva, but these

measures proved futile at Tuscawilla.³² Where Weeks had hoped to harvest over 250 bales of cotton in 1866, he harvested less than 100. In addition, cotton prices fell to nine cents per pound. Weeks' personal finances were in shambles by 1869, and he would spend the next 20 years repaying debts he incurred during this period.³³

Weeks' financial failure was later used as ammunition by his political enemies. In the 1872 Congressional Ku Klux Klan hearings, one of the issues addressed was the non-payment of agricultural contracts to freemen. John Williams, President of Leon County's Democratic Club, recalled a casual encounter with Major E. C. Weeks:

I met Major Weeks on the road and he spoke to me in reference to buying cotton. I said, "Major, see the men at Clairvaux place." The next day I returned to Clairvaux and asked one of my head men if Major Weeks had been there. He said, "Yes, but Burton would not sell his cotton, preferring that you should have it." Major Weeks was to get cotton at 25 cents on 90 days time. To this time Major Weeks owes those boys \$1,125.00. He had never paid them.³⁴

Williams' testimony was prejudiced in that he had attempted to shift blame of mistreating former slaves into the Republican camp, but doubtlessly Weeks was experiencing financial problems. In 1875, Tallahassee lots 3, 4, 5, 6, and 12 owned by Weeks were scheduled for sale at public auction for back taxes owed.³⁵ A similar notice appeared in 1876, advertising two more of Weeks' downtown lots for sale.³⁶

In spite of Weeks' financial difficulties, he maintained the admiration of powerful Republican friends in Tallahassee. During

his first two years in Leon County, he formed close relationships with future Governors Harrison Reed and Ossian Hart. He most likely secured personal loans from these prominent Republicans. His obligations at Tuscawilla prevented him from attending Florida's 1868 Constitutional Convention; however, he was active in the Leon County Republican Party at this time.

Florida's Republican Party during Reconstruction suffered from divisions within the ranks. Weeks aligned himself with the radical elements in the party led by Josiah T. Walls, and by 1869 Weeks was becoming more active in party politics; having lost his property, he sorely needed a state or federal appointment that might provide him with a steady income.

Florida's first Republican Reconstruction Governor, Harrison Reed, belonged to the moderate wing of the party. He attempted to pacify political resistance by appointing a number of Democrats to his cabinet, but no matter how fairly Reed attempted to govern the state, the Democrats never fully cooperated. Reed was subjected to four separate attempts at impeachment during his term in office.³⁷ Efforts to oust Reed from office came first from the Democrats for Reed's support of the Republican platform. He then came under attack from his own party, accused of being overly conciliatory toward Democrats. Throughout Reed's stormy term of office, Weeks remained loyal to the Governor, and attempted to maintain black support for Reed's administration.

During one attempt by the Florida Legislature to remove Reed from office, he appointed Major E. C. Weeks as Lieutenant Governor. The office was vacant at the time, owing to an election dispute involving the previous office holder. Reed hoped that in the event Democrats succeeded in removing

him from office he would choose a radical as his successor. The Governor may have felt that a former Union officer who had fought alongside black troops would leave the Democrats in an even more unfavorable political position. Weeks' appointment was vehemently opposed by the Democrats. The Democratic press labeled the appointment "the most extraordinary act that was ever perpetuated under the Republican Governor. Clearly it is an attempted usurpation."³⁸

In the summer of 1870, Florida's Legislature met in special session for the purpose of rectifying the state's poor financial condition. At the opening of the session, Weeks attempted to exercise his right as Lieutenant Governor and preside over the Senate. Walking boldly up the podium, Weeks seized the gavel and called the Senate to order. At that point, Senator John A. Henderson inquired of the other senators as to "what was that in the President's chair?"³⁹ Weeks replied that he had been appointed Lieutenant Governor by Harrison Reed. Henderson declared that the senate would not recognize such an appointment, and he was sustained by a vote. The Senate Sergeant at Arms was then instructed to place Weeks under arrest until released by the Senate. In Weeks' defense, "two colored senators remonstrated against this incident," and Weeks was permitted to retire "in good order."⁴⁰ One of the black senators remonstrating on Weeks' behalf was Josiah T. Walls, who later represented Florida in the U. S. House of Representatives.

Although the Legislature had refused to recognize him as Lieutenant Governor, Weeks continued to hold the office, and in March 1870 he applied to the state comptroller's office for his much-needed salary. State Comptroller Robert H. Gamble was one of the Democrats Reed appointed to office in the spirit of conciliation and

Gamble refused to recognize Weeks' appointment or issue his pay. To obtain his salary, Weeks filed a Writ of Mandamus with the State Supreme Court. On June 9, the writ was granted by the court and Gamble was ordered to show just cause for his refusal to compensate Lieutenant Governor Weeks. Gamble countered that Weeks was unqualified to hold office as the court had not yet ruled on the election dispute involving the former Lieutenant Governor. Sitting on the court was Weeks' friend and future governor, Associate Justice Ossian Hart. Hart wrote in a concurring opinion:

Here there is a conflict by a subordinate officer of the executive department against the action of its head, the governor who granted this commission.... If questions of this kind are allowed to be tested in the manner attempted in this case, insubordination and confusion might follow, to the great embarrassment of the government. . . . All the official acts of the Governor should be considered legal, respected, and obeyed, until decided by constitutional tribunal to be illegal.⁴¹

The court concluded that Gamble was the Governor's subordinate, and therefore he was obliged to pay Lt. Governor Weeks his salary.

As reward for suffering the slings and arrows of the Democrats, Governor Reed appointed Weeks to a vacant position on the Leon County Commission in 1871. The office hardly provided the compensation Weeks needed to remedy his financial situation, but it offered political experience and Weeks looked forward to a bigger and better political future. As a county commissioner, Weeks was sympathetic to local citizens requesting that their property

taxes be lowered, and was concerned with exterminating the bats in the Leon County Jailhouse.⁴² Weeks spent less than six months on the commission.

In the summer of 1872, Weeks sought his party's nomination for Governor. In Leon County he had strong support from black leader John N. Stokes. In attempting to gain the nomination, Weeks locked into a bitter political struggle with Governor Reed's State Treasurer, Simon B. Conover. Conover had aided attempts by Republicans to impeach Governor Reed. At the Leon County Republican Convention, Weeks and Conover fought to a deadlock over delegates. Unable to reach an agreement, both Weeks and Conover delegations attended the State Convention in Monticello on August 7, 1872. The State Central Committee offered a compromise, allowing both the Weeks and Conover delegations to be seated with six and one half votes apiece, but Conover walked out, unsatisfied with the arrangement.⁴³ The two men would remain bitter political enemies for years to come struggling for control of the Leon County Republican machine.

On the convention's first ballot for governor, Weeks pulled a scant seven votes, with 44 for Stearns, 32 for Ossian Hart and 13 for Reed. Stearns won the nomination, but Weeks joined with the majority of the black delegates in threatening a walkout in favor of Hart, whom they preferred. To preserve party unity, Stearns agreed to decline the nomination and accepted instead the lieutenant governorship. Hart was elected the next Governor of Florida.⁴⁴

For supporting Hart, Weeks was appointed Leon County Sheriff on February 4, 1874.⁴⁵ Federal troops stationed in Tallahassee insured that Sheriff Weeks had plenty of support in his new position. Stearns' unselfish

act at the convention cost him very little, as Governor Hart died 13 months after taking office. Sheriff Weeks served as a pallbearer at his friend's funeral.

The 1877 Hayes compromise allowed Democrats to Reestablish control over the majority of Florida counties, but Leon County, with its large black population, remained firmly in Republican hands. In 1876, Weeks was elected to the first of two terms as a state representative from Leon County. He was relegated by the Democrats to serving on committees of relatively minor importance. He sat on the Postal Committee, and his military experience placed him on the Militia Committee. Representative Weeks never succeeded in sponsoring a bill that passed. His bill for the care of lunatics failed, but did result in some compromise legislation being passed. Weeks' legislation had been prompted by a local physician who advised him that the state prison incarcerated the insane, indigent, deaf, dumb, and blind along with the convicted criminals. Weeks' bill No. 39 proposed the establishment of separate facilities for the less than fortunate. The Democrats had returned to power pledging to restore financial responsibility in state government and opposed the bill on the basis of cost. Week's bill was defeated in the Education Committee. Democratic Representative P.P. Bishop wrote:

There is much to commend in the plan, but the necessity of making up during the present year, a deficiency of \$200,000 appears to the committee to be an insurable objection to the present increase of State Charities. It is therefore recommended that the bill not pass.⁴⁶

The Democrats' compromise was to lease out convicts to private companies and convert the prisons to facilities for lunatics.

Weeks and his fellow Republicans opposed this measure, fearing that Florida's convict lease system would be used as a tool of the Democrats to intimidate blacks with long sentences under harsh and dangerous conditions. In spite of efforts by Weeks and Republicans to defeat the Democrats' plan, the measures passed into law.

Leon County Republicans convened July 10, 1878, in Tallahassee, to nominate candidates for state senate and house. At this meeting Weeks performed the role of peacemaker between various warring factions. Solidifying his local support, Weeks considered a run for Congress. The local paper noted, "Whispers are heard on street corners that the Major has a strong local backing for Congress."⁴⁷ In the 1878 district convention, Weeks and other radicals once again opposed the nomination of Simon Conover for U.S. Representative. Conover was completing a term as United States Senator and was now running for U.S. Representative from the first district. A majority of Republicans viewed Conover as a moderate who offered the best possible chance at defeating the Democratic nominee, but Weeks adamantly refused to support the nomination. His personal dislike of Conover motivated Weeks to enter the race as an "Independent Republican" with no other purpose in mind than to split the Republican vote and insure Conover's defeat.⁴⁸ His run for Congress served that purpose, and Conover adhered to the career path of a more typical carpetbagger. With no prospects for a continued successful political career in Florida, Conover returned to the North.

After completing his first term in the Legislature, Weeks became Tallahassee's Postmaster in 1879.⁴⁹ He returned to serve another term in the House in 1885, but failed to win a seat on a standing committee.

Weeks reached the zenith of his political career at the time Republican power in Florida was rapidly declining. Democrats succeeded in intimidating or disqualifying blacks from voting, and when those measures failed they readily engaged in outright voter fraud to win elections. The rise of the Populist movement further diluted Republican strength, leaving the Democrats the only viable party in the state by 1890.

With the military no longer available to enforce Federal law in the South, that responsibility fell to a thinly stretched United States Marshal's office. In Florida the job was a thankless and dangerous position. In early 1890, Florida's U.S. Marshal resigned out of frustration and fear from whites who had recently killed one of his black deputies in Ocala. Weeks was nominated as a replacement, and immediately his selection was challenged by the Bourbon Democrats. A smear campaign was launched resurrecting Weeks' past as having killed a private while in a drunken stupor. President Benjamin Harrison ignored the prejudiced letters that bombarded his office and E.C. Weeks was hired as U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Florida.⁵⁰ For a brief time, he served as both U.S. Marshal and Tallahassee's Postmaster before resigning from the latter which was then filled by Weeks' old friend former Governor Reed.

In April of 1890, President Harrison wrote to his Attorney General, outlining what he expected from the new Marshal:

You will instruct United States Marshal Weeks, as soon as he qualified to proceed, at once to execute such writs of arrest as may be placed in his hands. If he apprehends resistance, he will employ such civil posse as he may seem to be adequate to discourage resistance or to overcome it. He should proceed with

calmness and moderation which should always attend a public officer in the execution of his duty, and at the same time firmness and courage that will impress the lawlessness with a wholesome sense of the danger of futility of resistance.⁵¹

Weeks responded enthusiastically to the President's instructions and reported that when necessary he would meet force with force."⁵²

The selection of Weeks for U.S. Marshal matched the right man with the right job. He had the necessary military and law enforcement experience and was strongly committed to black voting rights. His reputation in Florida had grown to that of a well respected individual—stern, fearless, and uncompromising in his demeanor. Since his court-martial acquittal 25 years earlier, Weeks had sworn off alcohol and was active in his church. Weeks' first wife, Mary, had died during that war years, and so on June 6, 1890, Weeks took the final step towards respectability marrying a wealthy Tallahassee widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Hunt Crafts.⁵³ His new marriage allowed him to recover financially. Tallahassee banker George Lewis endorsed him for Marshal as a man who had made good on all his debts. Weeks was 61 years old in 1890, with a new job and a new wife. The marriage notice in the Democratic press tipped a hat to their long-time adversary, writing, "Marshal Weeks has had a big run of luck recently, and the *Floridian* extends him a cordial congratulations."⁵⁴

Marshal Weeks set out immediately to bring law and order to Florida. He served long outstanding arrest warrants on criminals accused of civil rights violations, murders, and voter fraud. He put down a minor rebellion in Cedar Key where the

Democratic mayor had rejected federal authority in election procedures and assaulted the Republican customs house collector.⁵⁵ The limited resources of Marshal Weeks' office made it impossible to fully restore law and order in Florida, and blacks continued to be deprived of their voting rights, or even worse, lynched for the simplest offense. But Weeks' efforts were admirable. His office was often used by freedmen and white Republicans seeking sanctuary from mob violence, and Weeks was not deterred by threats or intimidation. When refused hotel accommodations he slept under the stars and his wife endured the bricks tossed through the windows of their private residence.⁵⁶ While serving as Marshal, Weeks maintained meticulous records and expense reports, and he demanded the same from his deputies. In 1892, he came before the Supreme Court once again, charged by one of his deputies with non-payment of services.⁵⁷ Weeks prevailed in the case, demonstrating that his former employee had failed to file the proper paperwork for reimbursement.

After 13 years of dedicated service as a U.S. Marshal, Weeks was appointed Surveyor General of Florida in 1903 by Theodore Roosevelt. The appointment rewarded Weeks' government service. Ill health forced his resignation two years later, and he died in Tallahassee on April 12, 1907.⁵⁸

Weeks' place in Florida's history is focused on his role commanding the Second Regiment Florida Cavalry in the Civil War. In that capacity he was a first-rate combat officer. Had he not been arrested and confined for months in Key West, his regiment might have achieved fame and glory, and most assuredly Weeks would have been promoted before the war ended. The events that took place on that cool clear

night in Cedar Key still remain clouded in mystery.

Weeks failed in his post war attempts at raising cotton. The idea of belonging to the planter elite was appealing, but the realities of plantation management were altogether different. His contribution to Florida's Reconstruction also remains somewhat clouded. The Republican party might have extended its reign past 1876 had it been able to maintain a united front. The party's lack of unity and bitter internal political wars prevented it from achieving the successes in education and civil rights it had promised Floridians. At times Weeks was guilty of adding to the party's disharmony. His differences with the party leadership cost him gubernatorial and congressional bids. His mentors had been Harrison Reed and Ossian Hart. Had Hart survived his term in office he may have passed the gauntlet down to Weeks, and today his name would be more than a footnote in Florida's history. But Weeks never really had the personality of a glad-handing politician. He finally found his proper place in life as a United States Marshal, and he executed the duties of that office responsibly.

Weeks' experience is not untypical of many Northerners that came as carpetbaggers and then slowly acclimated to the land, climate, and culture of the South. Weeks remained in Tallahassee, and his final resting place is in Tallahassee's historic Old City Cemetery. His legacy remains in the town he called home. The house that Weeks and his wife Elizabeth resided in is still standing on Park Avenue and is owned today by Weeks' great-grandson.

¹ Kyle S. VanLandingham, ed., "My National Troubles' The Civil War Papers of William McCullough," *Sunland Tribune* 20 (November 1994), 59-64.

² Rowland Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* 2 Vols. (Atlanta, 1902), 715.

³ Ibid.; Rerick mentions that Weeks first enrolled at Yale University, but there are no records of Weeks ever being admitted or attending Yale. Letter to the author, Yale University Office of the registrar, December 1, 1993.

⁴ Charles Lee Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut; Our First Admiral* (Annapolis, 1943), 62.

⁵ *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* 30 Vols., (Washington, D.C., 1894-1927), Series I, Vol. 18: 204. Hereafter referred to as *Official Naval Records*.

⁶ Ibid., 203-204.

⁷ Ibid., 203.

⁸ Ibid., 650.

⁹ Ibid., 651. George E. Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees, and Contrabands: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861-1865*. (Tuscaloosa 1993), 56-57.

¹⁰ *Official Naval Records*, Series I, Vol. 18: 732.

¹¹ Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees & Contrabands*, 100-114.

¹² Ibid., 162.

¹³ United States Army. *Office of the Advocate General. Court-Martial File No. NN3450, Pertaining to Major Edmund C. Weeks*. (microfilm copy) P.K. Yonge Library, Gainesville, Florida, 1864. Hereafter referred to as *Court-Martial Records*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ For more on William Strickland see: Buker, *Blockaders Refugees & Contrabands*, 98-115.

²⁰ *Court-Martial Records*.

²¹ U.S., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols. (Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Vol 47: 408. Hereafter referred to as *Official Army Records*.

²² Charles C. Fishburne Jr., *The Cedar Keys in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. (Cedar Key, FL, 1982), 15-18. Also see: R. Thomas Dye, "Race, Ethnicity and the Politics of Economic Development: A Case Study of Cedar Key, Florida," (M.A. Thesis) Florida State University, 1992. 30-31. The engagement at Number Four is still a source of local pride in Cedar Key. Levy County residents describe it as a "whippin'" by Captain Dickson that prevented Union troops from penetrating Levy county, but in truth Union troops were returning from a raid. The myth of the skirmish can be traced to: *Diary of Eliza Hearn*, Historical Records Survey, Jacksonville: (State Archives Survey W.P.A.), 1937; on file at the Cedar Key Public Library.

²³ *Official Army Records*, Series I, Vol. 47: 408.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 49: 43.

²⁵ See: Mark E Boyd, "The Joint Operations of the Federal Army and Navy Near Saint Marks, Florida, March 1865," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 29 (July 1950-April 1951), 97-105. Edwin C. Bearess, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Marks Ends At Natural Bridge," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 45 (July 1966-April 1967), 369-389.

²⁶ Edwin C. Bearess, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Marks Ends at Natural Bridge," 381.

²⁷ *Official Army Records*, Series I, Vol. 49: 69.

²⁸ Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees & Contrabands*, 169.

²⁹ *Weeks Papers*. Box 1, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee Florida. Hereafter referred to as *Weeks Papers*.

³⁰ Clifton Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida, 1860-1967*. (Gainesville 1968), 19-20.

³¹ Mrs. Parkhill-Mayes, interview with the author. Monticello, Florida, March 1, 1993. (notes)

³² *Tallahassee Sentinel*, April 3, 1869.

³³ *Weeks Papers*.

³⁴ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Testimony Taken By the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, Florida. 42nd Congress, 2nd session, (Washington, D.C. 1872), 239.

³⁵ *Tallahassee Sentinel*, January 2, 1875.

³⁶ *Tallahassee Sentinel*, February 19, 1876.

³⁷ Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida*. (Coral Gables, 1971), 251.

³⁸ *Tallahassee Weekly-Floridian*, January 25, 1870.

³⁹ John Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida* (Jacksonville, 1888), 118.

⁴⁰ *American Annual Cyclopedia*, 299-300.

⁴¹ *Florida Reports*, Vol. XIII, 32.

⁴² Leon County, Minutes of the Leon County Commission Meetings, Tallahassee: Leon County Courthouse, 1871.

⁴³ Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet* (Gainesville, 1974), 278.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Weeks Papers*.

⁴⁶ Florida, *House Journal* (Tallahassee, 1877).

⁴⁷ *Tallahassee Weekly-Floridian*, August 13, 1872.

⁴⁸ Edward C. Williamson, *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age, 1877-1893* (Gainesville, 1976).

⁴⁹ *Weeks Papers*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Jesse Jefferson Jackson, "Republicans and Florida Elections Cases 1877-1891," (Ph. D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1974) 310.

⁵² *Weeks Papers*.

⁵³ *Tallahassee Weekly-Floridian*, June 9, 1890.

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, "Affairs at the Cedar Keys," *The Congressional Record*, 51st Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C., 1890).

⁵⁵ George Murphy, Interview with the author, Tallahassee, Florida, March 5, 1993. (Notes in collection of the Author.) Mr. Murphy recounted stories told to him by his grandmother of racially motivated vandalism perpetrated on the Murphy house, Marshall Weeks' Tallahassee residence. Mr. Murphy is the great grandson of E.C. Weeks. Also see: Williamson, *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age*, 166: "Marshal E.C. Weeks was refused horse-hire and hotel accommodations while in the execution of ordinary civil cases."

⁵⁶ *Florida Reports*, Vol. XLIII, 616.

⁵⁷ Tallahassee *True Democrat*, April 18, 1907.

⁵⁸ Tallahassee Historical Society, *The Murphy House File*, The McDougal House, Tallahassee, Florida.